Find Out Where You Can Still Find Land

Where Free Land Can be Found in the USA

By Claude Davis

Where Free Land Can be Found in the USA

Table of Contents

Homesteading Today 6
Land for Free..... 8
Nebraska..... 9
Iowa..... 10
Kansas..... 11
Minnesota 13
New York..... 14
Alaska..... 14
Cuyahoga National Park, Ohio 16
Land for Businesses 16
Other Free Land Opportunities 18
Junk Land 18

Anyone who has spent any time around the prepping and survival community knows that the goal of every prepper is self-sufficiency. But just what does that mean? How self-sufficient do you need to be, before you can consider yourself truly self-sufficient? How big a stockpile do you need?

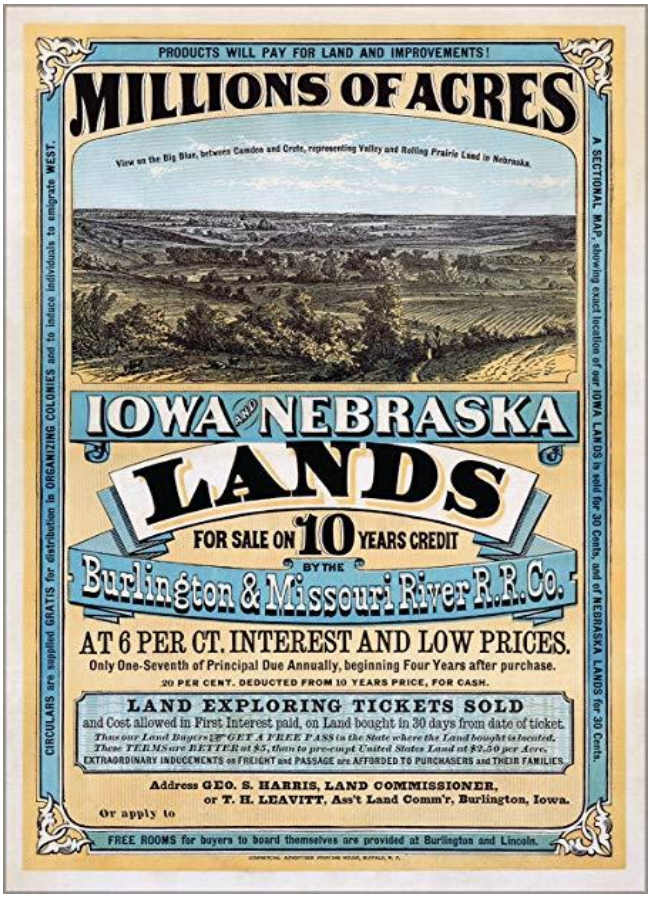
Actually, there's more to it than having a stockpile; for no matter how big your stockpile grows, it will eventually run out. That's why experienced preppers tend to look towards growing their own food. Put another way, these experienced preppers aren't looking to their homes just being a survival retreat, but rather, being a homestead.

But just what is a homestead? There are many different definitions given to this word, depending on whether you are thinking in a legal sense, or in the sense of someone who is thinking of self-sufficiency.

That's really what we're talking about, and in that regard, a homestead is a small, subsistence level farm, allowing one to grow enough food for their own or their family's survival. It's not a commercial farm, but rather the true expression of self-sufficiency.

Once upon a time, early American settlers who were willing to move into the sparsely populated western territories of the United States

were given the opportunity to scoop up a parcel of land and use it to make their own destiny.



Known as the Homestead Act of 1862, any adult citizen who had not fought against the United States in armed conflict could travel west and claim a 160 acre plot of land, so long as they were willing to make improvements to that land (usually building a home) and stay, working that land (usually farming) for at least five years.

Soldiers who fought in the civil war could count the time they served as time spent on the land, so they had even easier access to free land.

Of course, settling out west in the mid-19th century, even on free land, didn't come without hardships, but the Homestead Act fast tracked settlement of the western frontier and brought to life the homesteader spirit that is such a prevalent part of U.S. history.

It removed several huge barriers, most notably the cost of the land, which many poor people came up against when it came to carving out a place of their own. Homesteading gave them a way to make a living and feed and care for their loved ones – not to mention a legacy they could pass on to their children and grandchildren.

HOMESTEADING TODAY

This seems like a complete and total pipe dream these days, doesn't it? Yet more and more experienced preppers are turning to homesteading. No, they aren't getting 160 acres of farmland and working it with a horse-drawn plow; but they are homesteading nevertheless. Actually, the modern homestead is much smaller, usually ranging one to two acres. Some people get by on even less.

I'm sure you've seen an article sometime about a family who grew all their own food in the backyard of their suburban home. That's homesteading and it can be done on as little as 1/5 of an acre. I had a neighbor once who farmed his backyard and about half of mine, growing all his own produce and even passing some on to me.

Modern gardening techniques make this possible. Granted, people who are doing this style of suburban homesteading aren't usually raising any livestock larger than chickens and rabbits. Nor are they typically growing their own grains. What they're doing is raising mostly vegetables, along with possibly a few fruit trees. Even so,

they're successfully growing food to feed their families. In the case of a major disaster, the best of them are ready to expand their operations to the point of growing enough food to fully feed their own families.

If you want to be truly self-sufficient, having a place where you know you can care for your family, then homesteading is the way to go. If you can, get yourself a couple of acres and really set yourself up right. But if you can't; at least get a good-sized suburban lot and turn it into an urban homestead. Using raised beds and planting properly, you'll be surprised how much you can grow.

Two acres is considered enough to do a complete homestead, meaning that you are growing your own grains and have a little bit of livestock as well. But as we've already discussed, you can get by on much less, if you limit yourself to growing fruits and vegetables, as well as limiting your livestock to chickens and rabbits.

There are still places out there where you can get a plot of land for free or pretty close to it.

LAND FOR FREE

Don't assume that this list is by any means complete. These are a few places I was able to find, where land is available for free. Mostly, they are small communities which have land that is available, usually home lots.

While that may not be as big as what you want, you could do suburban homesteading. Take a look at the opportunities below and decide if any of them might be right for you and your family.

One thing to keep in mind is that such land is constantly coming available and then being snapped up by people like you and I, who want their own piece of the pie and are willing to work for it.

Just recently, a small town about 30 miles from where I live, gave away 90 lots and homes. I don't mention it, because the giveaway is already over. But you never know when such a giveaway might happen.

I don't know if they still are, but for a while the city of Detroit was giving away homes to anyone who wanted them. While those homes may not have worked out well for any sort of homesteading, it does serve to illustrate that these opportunities exist all over. So keep your eyes open for new opportunities.

When you find one of these places, you will have to pass through an application process. The city giving away the land will expect you to move in fairly quickly and start making improvements on your homestead. So be ready for that. While they will give you some months to move, they won't allow you to just sit on the land and not do anything with it.

Besides, the whole idea is to take possession of the land and start building your homestead. You don't want to wait until a disaster strikes, in order to start homesteading.

Rather, the idea is to have your homestead in operation, so that when the disaster strikes and everyone else is in a panic, you're already self-sufficient and ready to go.

NEBRASKA

Nebraska is one of our nation's great farming states. In the northern part of the American Breadbasket, this state has produced a sizeable portion of not only our country's food, but the world's food for the last 100 years or more. With plentiful water and good farmland, Nebraska is a good place to live.

The only thing I could say against Nebraska, as a state for homesteading, is that your growing season will be a bit shorter than it would, if you were living farther south.

Wapcaplet [CC BY-SA 3.0]

To compensate for this, you'll probably want to build some greenhouses, which will allow you to start your growing season a few weeks earlier and end it a few weeks later, getting more from your farming efforts.

Beatrice, Nebraska

Unlike a lot of places you'll find on this list, Beatrice is not super rural – nor is it a very small community that needs an influx of new faces and businesses. The city uses their Homesteading Act of 2010 to keep lots in the city from becoming run down.

Like the Homesteading Act of old, people must build a home on the property within a year and stay for at least five years. While there aren't any lots currently available, it's worth checking regularly to see if any new ones come up.

Curtis, Nebraska

The small town of Curtis, NE offers free lots for the building of single family homes on paved streets with all utilities provided. With a population of under 900, Curtis claims to be a great place to raise a family or retire. Curtis also offers the unique opportunity to get a free lot on which to build a business, as well.

Ellwood, Nebraska

This small community has set aside a number of lots to be given away. While some are already gone, there are others which are still available as of this writing. The lots are 110 foot by 150 foot, which is a pretty good size. You must build a home that is at least 1400 square feet, with a two-car garage.

Loup City, Nebraska

This city offers two different programs, for those who are looking for free land to build a home. The Workforce Homes program offers free residential lots for those with qualifying income and assets.

In some cases, they might also offer up to $20,000 in down-payment assistance. The other program, which they call the Market Rate Homes, offers homes on a first-come, first-serve basis. Only a $1,000 deposit is required, which is refundable upon completion of construction.

IOWA

The climate in Iowa is going to be roughly like it is in Nebraska. There is plenty of water and good farmland to be had. But once again, you're going to either need to have your harvest in early or have greenhouses to extend your growing season.

Perry-Castaneda Library [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Manilla, Iowa

This small town is known for a low cost of living. Add that with the free land they are offering to build on, and you have a winning combination. You'll need to contact the city directly for information, as their website doesn't say a whole lot about the program.

Marne, Iowa

The small farming community of Marne, Iowa has free lots that it will give away to people willing to either build a home or place a modular home there, assuming that home meets some basic requirements laid out by the city.

The lots are fairly small at approximately 80 ft by 120 ft, but they are free and you can't really beat that. Marne is located east of Omaha, NE and west of Des Moines, IA. It may be just the place if you're looking for a new place to put down roots.

KANSAS

The state of Kansas has to be just about the ideal state for growing anything. If you've ever driven though the state, it is 500 miles of nothing but farmland. So a homestead fits in just right. Your growing season will be a bit longer than in either Nebraska or Iowa, but you'll have a good winter as well, so that you can stay indoors and work on those projects that need to be done by the fire.

Perry-Castaneda Library [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Lincoln, Kansas

Among the picturesque hillsides of Lincoln, KS, you'll find several free lots to be had in their new subdivision. Along with the opportunity to snatch up a building lot for free, Lincoln boasts recent improvements to their school facilities, updated parks, and access to medical care right there in town.

Mankato, Kansas

Located in Jewell County, Mankato is giving away free lots for building. You'll have to have finances in place to build your new home, and an agreement with a contractor to get it started within 6 months, plus they require an interview with the city council. Homes have to adhere to some basic standards set out by the town.

Marquette, Kansas

The town of Marquette offers free lots on the western side of town for people to build homes on. The town prides itself on its great sense of community and the safe environment it provides for everyone, young and old.

Osborne, Kansas

While they boast about their fiber optic communications network that provides high speed internet access to the community, the town of Osborne also offers free land for both residential and commercial purposes.

You could build a home and a business without paying for land in this cozy little town, and the town itself may even be able to help you with financing your business through their revolving loan fund.

Plainville, KS

The town of Plainville, located in Rooks county, has free lots available for new construction homes on full foundations. The lots are 155 ft by 93 feet.

Along with the free land, they also offer their free land homeowners a property tax reduction to help making living there even more

affordable. They'll give you a couple years to build your home – which must be at least 1,400 square feet – and get settled into it.

MINNESOTA

Perry-Castaneda Library [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Minnesota is going back north again, this time even farther than Nebraska or Iowa. While the state is known for having 1,000 lakes, it is also known for harsh winters. This is a place where you want to get your crops in early and watch the weather in the fall, so that you can get your harvest done on time.

Once again, greenhouses may very well be the way to go. Actually, if the water table allows for it, you might want a partially underground greenhouse, so that it the ground around it will help protect your greenhouse from the cold. Add in some additional solar collectors and your greenhouse, which is a passive solar building anyway, should stay warm enough to keep growing late into the season.

New Richland, Minnesota

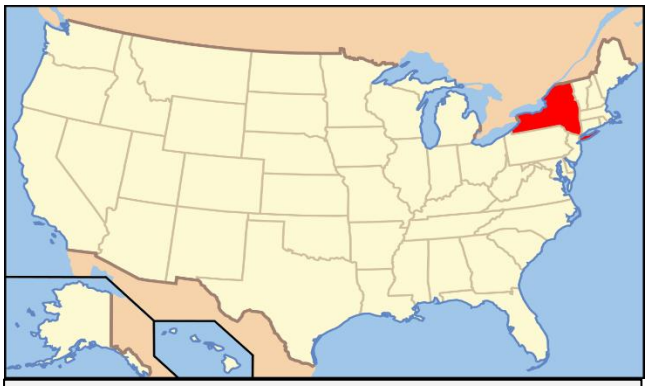
With a population of about 1,200, the city of New Richland has a free land program that requires you to build a brand-new home on your free 86 ft by 133 ft lot. While the lot itself is free, you will be charged a fee to cover the development of the streets and utilities to the subdivision, the estimated cost of which is $14,000 which can be paid over several years.

Claremont, Minnesota

Claremont is open about the fact that their program is a copy of the one in New Richland. Hey, if someone has a good idea, why not copy it? They're offering free lots to those who qualify. But to qualify you must have a gross income of less than $84,200 for a

family of two or $96,830 for a family of three. I don't think that will be much of a problem for most of us.

NEW YORK



Perry-Castaneda Library [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Ok, I'll have to admit, New York State isn't what most of us think of, when we think of homesteading. But have you ever spent any time in upstate New York? I have and its beautiful. Don't dismiss the idea, until you take a look at it.

Buffalo, New York

Buffalo is in the western end of the state on the eastern tip of Lake Erie. As such, they can have some really harsh winters. But you'll never have to worry about water and there are lots of woods to go hunting in. They have a slightly different program, where they are offering land for $1 as part of New York's Urban Homestead Program. Some of the land already has homes built on it, which would have to be brought up to code.

ALASKA

If there is ever a dream location for homesteading, it has to be Alaska, right? Oh, wait. It's really hard to farm in Alaska, because of all the cold and snow. Still, you could try to live by hunting and fishing, enjoying the great outdoors. Besides, if you're going to build

a log cabin, doesn't Alaska seem like the place to do it?

Anderson, Alaska

If you're looking for peace and quiet, in a place where you can get away from it all, Anderson, Alaska is it. With a population of less than 300 you won't have to worry about the kids in the mall. For that matter, forget about the gas station, grocery store or public street lights too. But they do like homesteaders and you can get free homesteading land upon application. A $500 deposit is required, which is refunded once your building is complete.

CUYAHOGA NATIONAL PARK, OHIO

Of all the opportunities out there, this one might actually be the best. This is a really unique opportunity that will allow you to potentially farm a portion of the land in the Cuyahoga National Park.

This program, called the Countryside Initiative, started in an effort to rehabilitate the dilapidated farms that were already located on the land and turn them into working, productive farms again.

LAND FOR BUSINESSES

Most free land opportunities you see advertised are for homes and homesteads. But there are actually a lot of opportunities for those who are looking to open a business. One of the big concerns for many small communities is attracting jobs.

So they are much more likely to give away land to those who bring jobs into their community, than those who are just looking to build a home. Even towns that don't advertise free land can be talked into giving land to those who start businesses and hire people.

Flagler, Colorado

The town of Flagler, Colorado has set aside 480 acres they are giving away to businesses. How much of that land you can receive for free depends on how many jobs you bring into the area.

So, if you want to combine your homestead with a business opportunity, there's an ideal location for you, about 100 miles east of Denver.

Muskegon, Michigan

This is actually a large city which is giving away land. Muskegon has free land in their industrial park, which they are offering to businesses which want to come in and operate, as part of their Michigan Renaissance Zone. They are also open to tax incentives, as well as lower water and electricity rates.

OTHER FREE LAND OPPORTUNITIES

There are several more opportunities for you to build a home or plant your homestead on a free plot of land in the United States, assuming you're willing to abide by the regulations set out at various sites. While you'd still have to come up with the cash of financing to build a home or farmstead, it's maybe not as far away as you'd once imagined.

JUNK LAND

Almost all of the listings I've given above are municipalities who are giving away lots appropriate for building a house on or parking a mobile home on. They really aren't quite big enough for a true homestead, although if you plan your space carefully, you could still grow quite a bit.

But what if you want more? Land, as we all know, is extremely expensive to buy. Or is it? Is it possible to buy cheap land, which would be possible to use for a homestead?

There's a category of land known as "junk land". It's called that because it is not commercially viable for any real purpose. It's far enough out of town that it isn't practical for commercial, retail or residential use. It doesn't have utilities on it and it probably doesn't have water on it either. But… and again I say but… it's cheap. You can often buy this land, when you can find it, for less than $1,000 an acre.

The tricky part is finding the land. Most of the time, junk land isn't listed for sale. If the owner is thinking of selling it, it might have a "For Sale by Owner" sign on it, but that's about it. No real estate agent would bother listing it, because the commission on the sale isn't enough to make it worth their time.

The easiest way to find junk land is to advertise that you're looking for it. However, I'll warn you; if you advertise that you're looking for junk land, expect to get 100 phone calls from real estate agents who are going to try and sell you something for $20,000 an acre. They'll also try and convince you that what you're looking for doesn't exist, as part of their sales strategy.

But that doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It does. Typically, it's land that someone inherited but never used. They never sold it, because it just wasn't worth the effort. But that doesn't mean that it isn't worth owning and won't work out as a homestead. Although I will say, you will have to do a lot of work to it, in order to make it a homestead; and then, when you do, it will be an off-grid homestead.

There are many things you have to consider, when looking at junk land:

- **Access** – You are going to have to make sure you have access from the roads to your land. This may mean signing a contract with some farmer or rancher, allowing you to use their private roads.
- **Water** – Your biggest need is going to be water and there probably won't be water on site. That either means drilling a well, harvesting rainwater or trucking water in. Be sure to have a plan for water, before deciding to buy any piece of junk land; and be sure to take into consideration how much water you'll need for growing your food.
- **Electricity** – There won't be electric power and to get electric power will probably require running miles of power lines, all of which you would have to pay for. It wouldn't hurt to check on that, but you will probably need to produce your own power via wind or solar.
- **Sewage** – You'll need to install a septic tank. Of all the problems you'll face, this is probably the most straight-forward. You might even be able to do it yourself, depending on the county's building code and regulations.

- **Flooding** – Make sure that you're not buying a piece of land in a 100-year flood plain. You just don't need the hassle.
- **Fencing** – If you're going to raise any sort of livestock, you're going to need to fence in your land or at least part of it. Running a fence around a couple of acres is a lot of work and can be pretty expensive.

None of these potential problems are serious enough that you shouldn't consider buying junk land; they're just things that need to be taken into consideration before making that decision. In some cases, it will be easy to overcome these problems; but in others, it won't.

For example, there's a lot of junk land available in West Texas for an excellent price. You can buy 10 acre lots for a song. But there is very little rainfall and the water table is very low.

So, if you're going to drill a well, it's going to have to be a deep one. The only other option is to truck in the water. Not an impossibility; but rather difficult nevertheless.

Junk land in the states listed above won't have this problem, as those are all states which have a reasonable amount of rainfall. As long as rainwater collection is still legal in those states, you could harvest enough rain water off your own land to take care of your needs.